



## **Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update**

October 1 - 31, 2008

The following is a summary of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR) and in New Mexico on the Apache National Forest (ANF) and Gila National Forest (GNF). Non-tribal lands involved in this Project are collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA). Additional Project information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either Web site, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The Reintroduction Project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT). Other entities, including private individuals and nongovernmental organizations, cooperate through the Project's Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets periodically in Arizona and New Mexico.

To view weekly wolf telemetry flight location information or the 3-month wolf distribution map, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. On the home page, go to the "Wolf Location Information" heading on the right side of the page near the top and scroll to the specific location information you seek.

**Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to:** (928) 339-4329 or toll free at (888) 459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at (800) 352-0700.

**Numbering System:** Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 24 months or pups. The capital letter "A" preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

**Definitions:** A "wolf pack" is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established territory. In the event that one of the two alpha (dominant) wolves dies, the remaining alpha wolf, regardless of pack size, retains the pack status. The packs referenced in this update contain

at least one wolf with a radio telemetry collar attached to it. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

## **CURRENT POPULATION STATUS**

At the end of October 2008, the collared population consisted of 27 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 12 packs and one single wolf. Some other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with radio-collared wolves, and others are separate from known packs.

Seasonal note: In October 2008, we continued our fall trapping efforts to document pack status and pup recruitment in the BRWRA. We trapped and collared one new male wolf pup (mp1160) from the Dark Canyon Pack in New Mexico. We have also been assisting the WMAT with trapping efforts to identify uncollared wolves on the FAIR. The status of pup recruitment remains unknown for the San Mateo, Bluestem, Lofer and Luna Packs at this time.

### **IN ARIZONA:**

#### **Bluestem Pack (collared AF521, AM806 and F1042)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Bluestem Pack in its traditional territory on the ASNF and the FAIR.

#### **Hawks Nest Pack (collared M1044, AF1110 and mp1155)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Hawks Nest Pack in its traditional territory on the ASNF.

#### **Paradise Pack (collared AM795)**

Throughout October, AM795 continued to be located primarily within the Paradise Pack's traditional territory on the ASNF and the FAIR. This male wolf's wider ranging movements in October indicate that it is actively looking for a female wolf. The IFT has not documented any wolves with AM795 since July.

#### **Rim Pack (collared AF858 and AM1107)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Rim Pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF.

#### **M619 (collared)**

The IFT located M619 in the central portion of the ASNF and western portion of the GNF during October.

### **ON THE FAIR:**

#### **Bacho Pack (collared AM990 and fp1154)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Bacho Pack on the FAIR.

#### **Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Lofer Pack on the FAIR.

## **IN NEW MEXICO:**

### **Dark Canyon (collared AM992, AF923 and mp1160)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Dark Canyon Pack in its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF.

### **Laredo Pack (collared AF1028)**

As the month of October progressed, the IFT documented AF1028 moving north out of the Gila Wilderness into the central portion of the GNF. These movements indicate that it is actively looking for a male wolf. The IFT has not documented any new wolves with AF1028 since August.

### **Luna Pack (collared F1118 and M1156)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Luna Pack in its traditional territory in the west-central portion of the GNF.

### **Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871, AF861 and F1115)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Middle Fork Pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness and central portion of the GNF. Female wolf F1115 has begun to travel separately from the other members of the Middle Fork Pack, but still within the traditional pack territory. These movements indicate that it is dispersing and actively looking for a male wolf.

### **San Mateo Pack (collared AF903 and AM1114)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the San Mateo Pack in the north-central portion of the GNF.

### **Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038, mp1157 and mp1158)**

Throughout October, the IFT located the Fox Mountain Pack in the northwestern portion of the ASNF and the western portion of the GNF.

## **MORTALITIES**

On October 13, the IFT found MP1159 (pup-of-the-year from the Rim Pack) dead in Arizona. The initial investigation suggests that this wolf died as the result of at least one gunshot. This case is under investigation.

## **INCIDENTS**

In total, the IFT investigated four potential depredation incidents in October. None of the incidents were confirmed as wolf depredations. Summaries of the investigations are as follows:

On October 8, the IFT located a dead sheep near Greens Peak in Arizona. Wildlife Services (WS) personnel investigated the carcass on October 10 and determined that the sheep died of unknown natural causes.

On October 9, the IFT located a dead cow on the Big Lake road in Arizona. WS personnel investigated on October 19 and determined that the cause of death was a vehicle collision.

On October 14, WS investigated a dead cow and calf near Cox Canyon in New Mexico and determined that both animals died of unknown causes.

On October 30, WS personnel investigated a dead cow near Snow Lake in New Mexico and determined that the cause of death was bloat due to the ingestion of noxious weeds.

On October 21, the representatives from the lead agencies and cooperating counties from the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (AMOC) met via a conference call to discuss ongoing efforts to trap and translocate wolf M1114 in New Mexico. On September 10, the IFT assigned two depredation incidents to this wolf, bringing the total number of depredation incidents assigned to it within a 365-day period to four. The original management decision from the USFWS was issued on September 12, and directed the IFT to trap and translocate this animal into the Gila Wilderness. This original management decision expired on October 27, and new direction from the AMOC and the USFWS was required to clarify future management actions by the IFT regarding this wolf. This information was provided on October 27, when the USFWS directed the IFT to continue efforts to trap or dart M1114 for an additional 14 days (until November 10). If captured, the IFT will translocate the wolf to an as yet unspecified location in New Mexico. If subsequent depredations occur in New Mexico between October 27, 2008, and June 27, 2009, and are definitively assigned to AM1114, the USFWS Regional Director will recommend immediate issuance of a Removal Order (authorizing use of all available means), pending discussion with the NMDGF Director.

### **CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

On October 14, project personnel captured M591 and F534 at the Ladder Ranch Wolf Management Facility. The pair was transported to the Southwest Wildlife Center in Arizona where they will be retired from the reintroduction program.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

The IFT continued to communicate and coordinate with members of the public and livestock operators. On October 4, John Oakleaf (USFWS) presented an overview of Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project goals, objectives and issues to eight students and two instructors from the University of Arizona's wildlife management program. This activity was part of the University's annual field trip to the Pinetop Region of the AGFD to provide training for prospective wildlife professionals on current wildlife management techniques and issues.

On October 10, Cathy Taylor (USFS) participated in an outreach effort sponsored by the Alpine Ranger District of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests at the elementary school in St. Johns, Arizona. She presented information to approximately 60 first and second grade students regarding wolf identification, basic life history and what the students should do if they see a wolf while in the forest.

On October 16 and 17, Cathy Taylor attended the Gila Natural Resources Symposium in Silver City, New Mexico. Cathy participated on a panel discussion at the symposium titled "Resources for Landowners." This panel discussed both the recent efforts by and future opportunities for agencies and non-governmental organizations to provide assistance to stakeholders who are impacted by Project activities.

On October 16, 17 and 18, Ellen Heilhecker (NMDGF) participated in an outreach event sponsored by the NMDGF on the Gila National Forest in New Mexico. The Gaining Access Into Nature program is designed to introduce individuals to wildlife in the state who might not normally be involved or interested in wildlife-related issues. Seven individuals participated in various activities, including the use of radio tracking equipment to locate wolves.

On October 18, Maggie Dwire (USFWS) participated in a National Wolf Awareness Week event hosted by the California Wolf Center. The California Wolf Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit education center committed to increasing public awareness and understanding of the importance of all wildlife by focusing on the history, biology, behavior and ecology of the gray wolf. Maggie gave two presentations, each to approximately 65 people, on the status of gray wolf recovery in the United States with a primary focus on Mexican wolf recovery in the Southwest.

On October 22, Chris Bagnoli (AGFD) and Terry Johnson (AGFD) presented an overview of the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Project to approximately 20 individuals at the Payson Habitat Partnership Committee meeting in Arizona. This group is made up of personnel from the AGFD and USFS, as well as local sportsmen. This group is responsible for cooperatively developing habitat improvement project proposals in the Payson area.

### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

James Waddell left his position with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish at the end of October. Thanks for all your hard work, James; you will be missed on the Project!

Susan Dicks began her employment with USFWS as a biologist on October 26. Susan is a veterinarian and will be stationed in the Albuquerque office overseeing the captive management facilities, as well as assisting the field team when necessary. Welcome, Susan!

### **REWARDS OFFERED**

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000, the AGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged an additional \$40,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$52,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at (800) 352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000, and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.